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SUBJECT: UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY: HUMAN RIGHTS IN BURMA

¶1. (U) On October 24 Professor Paulo Pinheiro, Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar, presented his report to the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly.

¶2. (U) Professor Pinheiro outlined the tragic events that have taken place since the publication of his report, including violent repression of peaceful protestors and the use of non-law enforcement officials and non-state armed groups together with security forces. He called for the release of all political detainees, including Aung San Suu Kyi. Pinheiro outlined his objectives for his upcoming trip to Burma, during which he will be particularly concerned with the situation of detainees and of those killed during the protests. Noting worsening economic and social conditions, Pinheiro stated that international humanitarian assistance should not be made hostage to politics. While international attention has focused on the protests for democracy in the cities, he also called attention to the situation of the repression of minority groups in the rural areas and to internally displaced communities. He noted the lack of reliable information available to Burmese citizens due to government suppression of outside communication, including radio and the internet.

¶3. (U) Burma responded that Pinheiro's report was not objective and was based on unsubstantiated allegations. The delegate expressed Burma's intention to fully cooperate during upcoming visits by Pinheiro and Gambari. The delegate blamed recent events in Burma on political activists and rabble-rousers who infiltrated the small peaceful protests over fuel prices and treatment of monks. He argued that security forces intervened only when the situation got out of hand. He alleged that the situation would not have deteriorated to the level it did had it not been for the subversive acts carried out by political opportunists aided and abetted by their foreign supporters. He stated that "a certain political party" in collusion with western embassies "even disseminated malicious news." The Burmese delegate also denied allegations of human rights violations, particularly those of sexual violence and recruitment of child soldiers.

¶4. (U) Ambassador Grover Joseph Rees delivered the US statement expressing concern for the human rights situation in Burma, particularly that of political prisoners, and calling on the Burmese government to implement the steps demanded by the Security Council and the international community. (Full text available at www.usunnewyork.usmission.press_releases/20071024_255.html)

¶5. (U) In addition to the United States, Portugal on behalf of the EU, France, Guinea Bissau, Switzerland, New Zealand, Japan, Germany, Brazil, Canada, and Australia all made statements expressing concern for the human rights situation in Burma. However, China noted Burma's cooperation and stated that the situation there is becoming calm. The Chinese

delegate said that the people and government of "Myanmar" should settle the situation, and that the international community should be involved through constructive engagement.

¶7. (U) Full text of Pinheiro's report can be found at:
<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N07/457/14/PDF/N0745714.pdf?openelement>
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